

Administrative Notice

AMS-05-03

7/11/05

COMMON CARRIER FARE POLICY

The Agricultural Marketing Service Policy on common carrier reservations for airline tickets is as follows:

The Federal Travel Regulations, Subpart B, 301-10, mandate that employees and invitational travelers traveling for the Federal Government must use the contract airline and select the contract fare, e.g. YCA or _CA, if available. Travelers also must fly using Coach Class service and U.S. Flag air carriers if available. For information on authorizing another class of service or use of a foreign flag carrier, refer to FTR 301-10-121-124 and FTR 301-10-131-143.

In locations with multiple airports, such as the Washington Metropolitan area, travelers must use the airport that has the cheapest contract fare. If the traveler wishes to fly out of an airport that is \$200.00 or more than the airport that offers the cheapest contract fare, the traveler must submit a written justification to his/her supervisor, requesting approval. No special requirement is necessary if the difference is less than \$200.00. At a minimum, supervisors should consider such factors as cost of local transportation, lost productivity time, and/or additional per diem when making a decision to approve the higher fare.

Employees may use non-contract fares if one of the following exceptions applies:

1. Space on a scheduled contract flight is not available in time to accomplish the purpose of the travel, or use of contract service would require otherwise unnecessary overnight lodging costs which would increase the total cost of the trip.
2. The contractor's (the airline under contract) flight schedule is inconsistent with official policy on scheduling travel during normal working hours.
3. A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare available to the general public, the use of which will result in a lower total trip cost to the Government, to include the combined costs of transportation, lodging, meals and related expenses.
Note: this exception does not apply if the contract carrier offers a comparable fare and has seats available at that fare, or if the lower fare offered by a non-contract carrier is restricted to Government and military travelers on official business and may only be purchased with a Government-issued travel card or a centrally billed account.
4. Rail service is available and is cost effective and consistent with mission requirements.

5. Smoking is permitted on the contract flight and the nonsmoking section of the aircraft for the contract flight is not acceptable to the traveler.

If a certain city pair does not have a contract, then the lowest fully refundable fare should be considered first.

If the non-contract fare is also non-refundable, restricted, or has specific eligibility requirements, the traveler must submit a written request to the approving official to use such fares. Authority to approve these fares has been delegated to Branch Chiefs with no further delegation. In order for the approving official to make a sound decision on whether to authorize one of the fare types listed on the attachment to this Notice, the traveler must include in the written request the purpose of trip, dates of trip, the contract fare if available and the exception that is used, the type of fare requested (e.g., non-refundable, restricted, or having specific eligibility requirements), and the penalty, restrictions, or requirements of the fare.

A copy of the approved request to use non-contract fares that are non-refundable, restricted, or have specific eligibility requirements must be attached to the AD-202 for Type C travel, and to the voucher for Types, A, B, and N.

If no prior approval is given, or if changes are made due to personal reasons, the traveler is liable for any additional cost or penalties as a result of using a non-contract fare. An approving official may, on a case-by-case basis, allow reimbursement of these types of expenses. The traveler must submit a written request to the approving official stating why he/she believes the expenses should be reimbursed.

If you have any questions, contact Shirley Ickes, AMS Travel Coordinator, on (202) 690-3733.

/s/

Kenneth C. Clayton
Acting Administrator

Attachment